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THE OFFICE ACTION

In the Office Action, the examiner has rejected claims 4-9 and 66-82 as being anticipated by Qin *et al.* (US Pat. 5,550,189) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

REMARKS

Claims 4-9 and 66-82 remain in the case.

Reconsideration of this Application is earnestly requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 4-6 and 66-82 have been rejected as being anticipated by Qin *et al.* (US Pat. 5,550,189) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection as follows.

Qin *et al.* disclose a method for producing a water-swellable, generally water-insoluble modified polysaccharide (*i.e.* carboxyalkyl polysaccharide). The method comprises reacting a carboxyalkyl polysaccharide with a polyol cross-linking agent such as ethylene glycol and butylene glycol to provide cross-linked carboxyalkyl polysaccharides. Applicants respectfully submit that the use of such cross-linking agents inherently results in a polysaccharide which is cross-linked by a backbone chain of atoms comprising ester linkages. The cross-linking reaction involves an esterification reaction. More specifically, the backbone has the general formula:



wherein "R" is the alkylene portion of the polyol (*i.e.* ethylene or butylene) and wherein "X" is the alkylene portion of the carboxyalkyl moiety.

Applicants respectfully submit that Qin *et al.* is silent about the use of activated polyalkylene glycols as cross-linking agents for polysaccharides. The use of such cross-linking agents results in a polysaccharide which is cross-linked by a backbone chain of atoms comprising repeating O-alkylene units, wherein the alkylene moiety is unsubstituted. The Applicants submit that cross-linked polysaccharides comprising a backbone chain of atoms of formula:



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wherein "n" is an integer ranging from 1 to 100, are not disclosed by Qin *et al.*

Applicants therefore respectfully submit that the cross-linked polysaccharides as defined in the presently pending claims are not disclosed by Qin *et al.* Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully asked to vacate his rejection of the claims.


CONCLUSION

For the reasons detailed above, the rejections of the claims are believed to have been overcome.

It is respectfully submitted that all claims presently on record in the application (Claims 4-9, 66-82) are patentable over the art of record and are now in condition for allowance. Further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is believed to be next in order, and such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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